

BELFAST WORKHOUSE.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 24 January 1881 :—for,

" COPIES of MINUTES of EVIDENCE taken at the recent Inquiry held at the BELFAST WORKHOUSE by Inspectors *Bourke* and *Brodie*, together with their REPORT thereon, and Final Decision of the Local Government Board :"

" And of any CORRESPONDENCE on this Subject between the Chief Secretary for *Ireland* and the Member for *Clonmel*."

(*Mr. Moore.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
11 March 1881.

BELFAST WORKHOUSE INQUIRY.

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— I. —

COPIES of the MINUTES of EVIDENCE taken at the recent Inquiry held at the BELFAST WORKHOUSE by Inspectors *Bourke* and *Brodie*, together with their REPORT thereon, and Final Decision of the Local Government Board.

Local Government Board, Dublin, }
1 February 1881. }

B. BANKS,
Secretary.

— No. 1. —

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT of WORKHOUSE by BOARD of GUARDIANS.

ROBERT L. HAMILTON, sworn.

I am a Justice of Peace for the borough of Belfast, and reside within the borough.

I wrote some letters in the spring of 1879, which were published in the local papers, respecting the workhouse at Belfast. The statements of that letter were drawn from what I had myself seen in the workhouse, and what I had heard in the Police Court during cases coming before me there.

The condition of the workhouse was described in those letters in strong language. I now read my letter of the 13th February 1879.

That letter was subsequent to an occasion on which I had made some observations from the bench on the subject of the workhouse, arising from cases then before me. The date was 3rd February 1879, and the report of the case is now before. The observations were reported in the paper on Monday the 10th. A communication from the Clerk of the Union had been read that day. It purported to give a resolution of the guardians in connection with the treatment of insubordination in the workhouse, which I regarded as both impertinent and improper, and at the conclusion of my remarks, I said "that the public were perfectly conscious that the present efforts were made with a view to reform the Union workhouse, and that the nest of drunkenness, immorality, and vice, of which it had been the shade, was being thoroughly exposed, as there was no use in attempting to blind the public in the matter."

The English of the observations is not of my making, but the sense is duly given.

I did not say what follows, viz.—"That there was no workhouse in Ireland that had such an infamous character." I so informed Mr. Taylor, the chairman, that same evening, when I met him.

In the letter of the 13th February 1879, before referred to, I stated that in the department called the nursery I found 79 women and 107 children. About 30 of the women were married women, and about 50 or 60 of the children were illegitimate and born in the house.

I did not mean to convey by those words that the condition of pregnancy of these women arose in the workhouse, nor that the evil I complained of was due to misadministration on the part of the board of guardians; but I did mean to attribute it (as stated further on in my letter) to the system which I condemn, and by which, in my opinion, such liberty and license, as afforded to a class purely and simply criminal, by the facilities given them of admission to the workhouse.

My letter went on to say that I found, in the separation ward, about 60 women and children, the women all unmarried, the children all illegitimate and born in the house. Some of these women had four or five children in the workhouse, and born in it. The language in this place from two of the women was indescribable.

I went on to say that in the laundry and sewing room I found numbers of young girls, 16 or 17 years of age, in an advanced stage of pregnancy.

In these remarks I meant to signify that the shelter of the house, open to this class, afforded a strong facility to the vicious acts of those men by whose means the girls had been brought to this state, and thus produced or encouraged one of the great evils of society.

As regards the association in one department of married and unmarried women to which I have already referred, I desire to express my most unfavourable opinion, looking upon it as a grave defect in the system, and a most improper practice.

Robert L. Hamilton.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

DAVID TAYLOR, SWORN.

I am chairman of the board. There have been no complaints of defective classification brought before the board. I have been chairman for some 18 years, and very regular in my attendance. I never heard any statement to the effect of women who had been a long time in the house, without quitting it, having been found to be in the family way.

I am aware there are large numbers of ill-conducted women admitted from time to time into the house. The only ground upon which they or any others are admitted is that of destitution. My impression, and that, I believe, of the board, is that we have nothing to do with character in considering the granting of relief, but simply to consider the question of destitution.

I do not think that at present the granting of provisional relief is too freely exercised by the relieving officer or the master.

The guardians have done all they could to check the practice of frequent running in and out of females, and especially women with children, and recently, at the suggestion of Dr. Corry, women of this class are required to promise to remain a month without quitting.

In reference to what fell from Mr. Hamilton, as to the masters being checked for bringing cases before the police court, I have to observe that the board did warn the master not to continue doing so without board orders.

The only direction I remember having been given by the guardians in reference to the exercise of the master's power of provisional admission, was to be careful in the case of women and young children at night.

I am not aware of any overcrowding, but I would not be surprised to hear of its existence now in some parts of the house. The new building, when opened, will relieve some of these departments. Other extensions are contemplated.

There have been some complaints at times of the quality of provisions given to the inmates, but they have not generally been found to be well grounded.

David Taylor.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th of November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

[The following Paper was put in by the last Witness.]

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF BELFAST BOARD OF GUARDIANS
at Meeting on 18th February 1879.

The following statement was made by the chairman, viz. :—

Gentlemen,

It will be in your recollection that at our last board meeting I called attention to a statement made by Mr. Robert Hamilton while acting as a magistrate at Petty Sessions, viz. : That there was not a workhouse in Ireland had such an infamous character as this one; that, in fact, it was a nest of drunkenness, immorality, and vice. I characterised the statement as untrue. I now repeat what I then said, and will add that it is not only untrue, but a serious reflection upon the master and the other officials who have the management of this house, believing that the statement was rashly and hastily made, I had hoped that on reflection he would have withdrawn it, but in place of that he published a letter on Thursday last, in which he stated that he had visited the workhouse, that he had ascertained there were therein a large number of illegitimate children that had been born in the house, that he found numbers of young girls, 16 and 17 years of age, who were about to become mothers, all unmarried. Now, does not this seem to insinuate that the profligacy of the mothers of these illegitimate children, as well as the condition of these unfortunate young girls, had been caused by the immorality which he alleges exists in the workhouse. Mr. Hamilton should know that the workhouse was erected as a place of refuge for the destitute, no matter from what cause their destitution may have arisen. Drunkenness and crime have driven these wretched and unfortunate creatures, with their children, into the workhouse for shelter, and because they are found there, he states in his letter that workhouse relief is a failure, and preponderates in its results enormously more in creating and maintaining wickedness than in relief to the needy and destitute. Again, he says, in his letter, seriously enough, at the same meeting, four of the guardians spoke against the increase of whisky. This is, surely, misleading, as he should know that whisky is only prescribed by the medical officers, who have sole charge of it, to patients

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in the infirmaries and hospital, and is, therefore, no evidence of drunkenness in the house.

Mr. Hamilton also states that the workhouse is more like a lodging-house than anything else, and complains of paupers being allowed out for the day to return in the evening. The master has no power to prevent this; any inmate can leave the house, on giving three hours' notice, and return the same day, and should the master refuse such admission, then a hue-and-cry would be raised by the public about the cruelty and inhumanity of the workhouse officials for leaving women and children lying exposed all night at the workhouse gate. The guardians have always deplored the existence of so much destitution arising from drunkenness and other causes, but they must relieve the destitute, no matter what their character may be, and I submit, therefore, that Mr. Hamilton discovered nothing in his visit to this workhouse to justify him in having made so serious an accusation against its management, and he should either withdraw the charge or give more substantial proof of the existence. I may say, for the information of those who may not have visited the house, that the inmates are all classified, and separate buildings are allocated to each class. Everything has been done so far as high walls and locked doors can do to prevent any intercourse between the different classes. The children in the school buildings have no opportunity of mixing with the adults in the house. The hospital and infirmaries are distinct and detached buildings, and entirely separated from the body of the house. The aged and infirm class of both sexes live entirely by themselves, the same may be said for those in the nursery and the apartments for the healthy classes. The separation ward is a building at the rear of the workhouse grounds, and is enclosed by a high wall; all unfortunate women and women having two or more illegitimate children are placed in this department; they are kept entirely separate, and have no intercourse with the other inmates, not even in the general dining hall, as their meals are all supplied to them in their own building. The department Mr. Hamilton hints as being even worse than those he had mentioned is in this building. I may also state that the gatekeeper has strict orders to admit no person who is in a state of intoxication, even although the applicant has a provisional order for admission from a relieving officer. His instructions, in such cases, are these, if they will not leave the gate, to give them into the hands of the police, and so careful are the guardians to prevent whisky being brought into the house, all friends of inmates who come to visit them are carefully searched before they are allowed in, so as to prevent any intoxicating drink being introduced. With these precautions, and knowing as I do that the master, and I may say all the officials, are strictly enforcing the rules and regulations for their guidance in their management of the house, I cannot but say that I entirely disagree with the extraordinary statement of Mr. Hamilton that this workhouse is a nest of drunkenness, immorality, and vice, and that it has a more infamous character than any workhouse in Ireland.

Moved by Mr. Bigger, and seconded by Mr. Christian:—

"That the guardians present approve of the chairman's statement in reply to Mr. Hamilton, J.P., charges respecting the conduct of this house, and adopt same as our unanimous opinion."

William F. Boyce, Clerk of the Union.

MARY THOMPSON, sworn.

I have been matron four years last August.

I know Sarah Auld. She was employed in 1879, as a general cleaner. And in the course of this duty, had to go over daily with other women, to wash out, and clean dormitories on the male side. Those dormitories were occupied by the healthy aged men and the able-bodied men. The women who go over to clean, are under the charge and supervision of the male officer of that department. The duty generally occupies the women an hour or an hour and a half.

I knew the man McCormick, who was married, in the workhouse, to this woman. I believe him to have been in the militia.

Sarah Auld was discharged (31st May 1879) from the workhouse to a situation in town, and on her re-admission (19th July 1879) I understood she was in the family way, and I questioned her. She admitted it, and laid it upon Mark McCormick.

There is no consecrated place of worship in the house. Divine service is solemnized by the chaplains of the three religious persuasions in the School-rooms, which are three in number—and all the inmates who are strong enough to attend, do so in one or other of these places.

During the time I have been matron, I have never heard it alleged that any impropriety of conduct, leading to the birth of a child, has occurred in the house. No case of the kind has ever been brought forward to the best of my knowledge. And I have reason to know that the woman referred to in certain cases mentioned in letters in the papers, and otherwise, had been in the habit of frequently going in and out of the house.

Mary Thompson.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 24th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.Q.J.

EVIDENCE bearing on the Efficiency of the MASTER of the WORKHOUSE, and his Fitness for the Office.

J. YOUNG BROWN, sworn.

I am an ironmonger, carrying on business in Donegal-place.

Up to the beginning of July last I was doing business with my father, in Castle-place. My father was a contractor to the workhouse. On several occasions the master refused to receive goods, as being inferior to sample. On the 10th January 1877 I find by my note-book that goods were brought to the workhouse at five o'clock in the evening, but after a long delay were not received, and had to be left exposed in a yard of the workhouse all night.

In the course of 1879 a quantity of hass brooms were rejected by Captain Whitla, and sent back on three different occasions as inferior to sample. I appealed to the guardians, and it was admitted by all present that my first delivery was fully equal to sample, and they were then received.

I have been much inconvenienced by the delays that take place in the reception of goods by the master, who will always do it in person, and I have lost the services of one of my porters, owing to his having been abused by the master in the delivery of goods.

The master called once, as I remember, and used disparaging terms in reference to goods delivered by me, in presence of customers and young men in the shop.

I have heard him curse and swear in my shop. I know of no reason for his doing so.

On the 30th October last, when I was contractor in place of my father, my porter, with his spring van, was kept waiting from 2.30 to 3.50. Tired of waiting he went on other business, and returned at 4.30, and waited for a quarter of an hour, and could get no person to take delivery of the goods. Had to lose his time next morning in delivering the same goods.

To Mr. Moffat.] The hass brooms substituted by us were not the same as those rejected by the master.

My porters were all men of good character.

To Dr. Corry.] My father was contractor for over twenty years. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no complaints as to the quality of goods supplied by him was ever made.

John Young Brown.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.C.

ROBERT CARLISLE, duly sworn.

I am a director of the Ulster Baking Company, and reside in Brookvale-avenue.

About a year and a half or two years since the company had a contract for bread.

On two occasions, when our account was being produced for payment, we found that the master at times, where we had delivered bread in batches, exceeding the stipulated weight, not only refused us credit for the overplus (to which we should not have objected), but actually charged us with it as so much deficiency. This was set right by the guardians on appeal, but even after that the master delayed our payment.

I remember one occasion when, owing to the repeated rejection of our bread, and its alleged subsequent reception of the very same, the directors determined to interfere. I therefore, having a practical knowledge of baking, ordered a change in the bread, but found it was made of better quality than I intended, and was giving my orders on the subject, when some of the very bread I thought too good was returned from the workhouse. I considered this so absurd that I determined to see to it myself. I sent up again the very same cart, and called to speak about it. The master was not present, and, my time being limited, I went to the storekeeper. He at once pronounced the bread good, and received it. I called again next morning, but heard no further complaint about that bread, so far as I can remember.

After our bread had been frequently complained of, I visited the store, and found the shelves in a most dirty state. I called attention to it, and I believe the master came before the guardians. The place was cleaned, and there were no more complaints of that kind, which had reference to blue mould.

To the Master.] The terms of our contract are that bread shall be more than twelve hours out of the oven when delivered; and I never heard any complaints in reference to this.

I think that the clerk wrote on more than one occasion by order of the guardians complaining of the quality of the bread, and I think it was always in reference to blue mould.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th November 1880.

Robert Carlisle.

R. Bourke, L.C.C.

JAMES ADAMS, sworn.

I am guardian of the union. Owing to the inferior quality of the bread, I proposed on 13th January last that a loaf of the bread delivered on each day of the week should be kept and shown to the Board on the day of meeting.

I have frequently complained of the quality of the bread, not only of the Ulster Company, but of all contractors; and the board of guardians ordered the clerk to write to them.

On the occasion referred to by Mr. Carlisle, that gentlemen sent for me to look at the bread that had been rejected, before he sent it back again, and I thought it fair, passable bread.

James Adams, T.L.G.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

JOHN CARSON, sworn.

I follow the business of wholesale grocer.

In the year 1877 I was contractor to the workhouse. Some barley for which we were contractors was rejected by the master in September of that year.

The master called on me in my office in corn market, and spoke in a grossly insulting manner in connexion with the quality of the barley. The tenor of his observations had reference to his belief of the bad quality of the barley. There were no expressions personally insulting to myself, but they were insulting as imputing to me the sale of inferior goods. He stated that unless we supplied a better article before a certain hour he would buy elsewhere at our cost. We sent up a further supply out of the same stock as the first, having but one lot of the same kind. It was refused. Ultimately the same barley was received after a correspondence had taken place, and after a supply had been purchased elsewhere at a higher price, and an attempt made to charge us with the difference, which attempt, however, was not persevered in.

Since this transaction I ceased to tender for goods, because I would not be subjected to insult from "such a fellow" as the master of the workhouse.

When barley lies in store for some time it may become rusty, but this was not so. All vegetables are subject to deterioration with time, and barley of a year old is inferior to fresh barley, the intrinsic quality of each being similar.

John Carson.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

ALEXANDER CUMING, sworn.

I am a tea and wine merchant, carrying on business in Donegall-place.

I was a contractor for tea for half year ending March 1877. On one or two occasions previous to the termination of the contract a complaint was made by the master as to the quality of the tea, and we exchanged some small quantities. The master sent for me on one occasion, and when I went up he stated the tea was not equal to sample. I asked him to produce the sample, but he said he had not got it. Some hot words passed between us, and after I left I got a business note from the master requesting me to send up the tea, which I did, of the same quality as before, and I heard no more of it.

In consequence of this dispute we have ceased to tender for goods to the workhouse. We do not purpose doing so whilst Captain Whittle remains master, both on account of his capriciousness in reference to receiving goods and his conduct and demeanour personally towards us.

Alexander Cuming.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

Rev. R. SMITH, sworn.

I have been Roman Catholic Chaplain of the workhouse since about the 1st May 1879.

I have solemnized one marriage in the workhouse, in the school buildings. It was in the schoolroom where mass is said, and it was after mass I celebrated the marriage. I had previously arranged for the parties' attendance there. They had met outside, and I knew they should be married. They had both been attending mass in the schoolroom for two or three months previously.

As far as I can judge they were both able-bodied persons.

I told the master of this on his speaking to me about it, but I did not report it officially.

His reason for asking me was in reference to the woman's change of name, which might cause some confusion unless it was known. I cannot exactly say what occurred between me and the master; I rather think he made some objection; but I know the practice has obtained, and that marriages were thus solemnised by previous chaplains. I believe it was done by the Rev. Father Crickard.

This is the only marriage I ever solemnised in the workhouse. I did not consider it my duty to enter this one in the chaplain's book. The only explanation I can give is, its being of unusual occurrence. I made all the previous arrangements for these persons relative to the marriage. No fees were paid.

I am not aware of having made any report of the marriage to the matron or other officer. All the Catholics present that morning knew of it. It was no secret.

I am almost every day in and out of the workhouse. I have observed no defects in the classification maintained in the workhouse; no improper association of inmates of different classes or persons of opposite sexes. As chaplain of the workhouse, I am glad of the opportunity of stating that nothing has at any time come under my notice showing any irregular association or intercourse between the inmates.

There are in this house many persons of different religious professions, Protestant and Catholic, and I have never seen any difference in the master's mode of dealing with them; in fact, I believe the majority of Catholic officers in the house would bear testimony to the kindness of Captain Whitla's behaviour towards them, as I would willingly do towards myself. And I would bear the same testimony towards his demeanour to Catholic inmates. I do not remember any complaint made to me by Roman Catholic inmates or officers of cruel treatment or harshness to them on the part of the master. I never could find any objection to his demeanour towards any of the inmates, Protestant or Catholic. I certainly could not consider the epithets harsh, cruel, and tyrannical as applicable to his dealings towards the poor.

To Mr. Stewart.] I would not consider it humane to keep destitute poor people outside the gate of the workhouse all night.

I have never heard the master curse, swear, or blaspheme in my sense of the word.

I have never seen the master under the influence of drink, nor have I ever seen any officers of the house, of whatever grade, in that state.

I have never come into contact with any pauper in the house under the influence of drink.

I met one case in which whisky was sold by one pauper to another. The person was a patient in the fever hospital, and given whisky as a stimulant by the medical officer, and, not caring for it, she was selling it to another.

I know nothing in reference to the sale of tea or provisions.

Richard Smyth.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 19th of November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.S.

Sarah Auld appears on the register as discharged on the 31st May 1879, and re-admitted on the 19th July 1879, and discharged 22nd September following. Re-admitted as Sarah McCormack on 13th October 1879, and marked married and discharged on 16th April 1880; re-admitted on 20th April with her husband, Mark McCormack, and discharged on 28th April. Their child was born in the workhouse on the 22nd March 1880.

Mark McCormack was discharged on the 2nd April 1879, and re-admitted on the 19th July.

JOHN M^A. PORTER, sworn.

I am at present storekeeper at Messrs. Dobbin's, and I was nine years employed as Protestant schoolmaster in S. Dublin Union.

I made a statement to the board of guardians within the last three months. I was called on afterwards to appear before the visiting committee. I did not do so, because there were no reporters present, or any person by whom I could be put upon my oath. I hold in my hand the complaint I then made.

I was employed for 31 days in the months of May and June to act for Mr. Kinnear, assistant in the master's office. My principal duty was to keep up the relief list and render general assistance in the keeping of the other books.

I found several irregularities during this time in the master's office.

1. I found that all inmates about being discharged, were brought from the bath-houses to the master's office. This was personally objectionable to me, owing to the filthy language employed by one to the other—women from the separation ward brought together with well-conducted persons.

2. I have found people in the master's office making extracts from books in the morning, the door having been opened and left open by the hall porter.

3. The assistant master, Weir, has been guilty of irregularities. He employs an inmate to work up his book; I believe his name to be McManus; this is the provision check. I have

have frequently heard him cursing. It is a matter of common occurrence swearing by the name of the Saviour. Whilst I was in the office Mr. Weir was in the habit of reading novels and playing games, whilst McManus was writing up his book in pencil. I have heard the master of the workhouse frequently complaining of his not keeping up indexes, and when books were not up to dates he would complain. When occupied in playing games it was out of the office.

4. I have heard of Mr. Kinnear's rations leaving the house. Mr. Weir has repeatedly told me of Mr. Kinnear sending out legs of mutton and shoulders of mutton. I heard the master say to Mr. Weir, in conversation on this subject, that he would see Mr. Kinnear should do so no more, that is, not carry away any more rations.

5. The hall porter in my time settled the chargeability of inmates, by writing it on the docket. I think it should be done by master or assistant master.

6. In my time the books contained the names of 75 persons who were not in the house. I detected it by discrepancies between the diet docket and the books, and also by the dormitory roll calls. I made a calculation of the annual loss from such a discrepancy, and found it £41 l. 17 s. 6 d.

7. When I got an opportunity I informed the master, who said he knew nothing of it. He ordered me to set it right. It had already been partly done. He said Mr. Weir had bamboozled him by counting people twice.

8. By order of Mr. Weir I gave to the gate porter the names of some persons erroneously appearing on the books as being inmates of the house, in order that they might appear to have been discharged. Mr. Rutherford remarked, when I gave these dockets, "Has this occurred again?"

9. I believe there is a want of system in the receipt of goods. I have seen a pauper weighing coal and signing receipt for it.

I think the master is not acquainted with the principles on which the books are kept, but is competent to say if they are written up to date, and angry if they are in arrear. I do not think he could detect errors.

Previous to putting in my report I was waited on by the diet clerk, Cherry. He told me he was deputed by officials in the house to wait upon me and prevail on me not to send it in. He said he was persecuted on my account as he had recommended me for the employment. I gave him my promise accordingly, provided I might hear no more of stories circulated about me after I had left. These stories got worse after my interview with him, and I was publicly told in the streets I had complicated the union accounts, and, in fact, that I was a robber. Thereupon I sent forward my report. Mr. Cherry had told me it would do me no good and would bring other people into trouble.

I have seen the master slightly under the influence of drink on two occasions. The first was the evening I counted the house. I met him in the female healthy department. Mr. Cherry was with me. It was from the master's excited manner towards Mrs. Young, the assistant-matron, that I came to this conclusion.

The second time was in the office. He was quite capable of discharging his official duties; but it was noticeable in his speech and he was excited.

I think the master counted the house twice while I was here.

I knew Mr. Weir once to send his servant to the cripple ward to buy a pennyworth of tea which she did, and my impression is she bought it from one of the pauper inmates.

The master generally comes to his duties about 10 o'clock in the morning. I have seen him coming from the direction of the outside gate. I do not know whether or no he sleeps out of the premises. He was kind and nice to me. I have frequently heard him cursing and blaspheming. His habits are terrible in this way; but I never heard him swear to paupers or in their presence, except my night he in the master's office.

I have heard the master in his office call some of the guardians duffers. I heard him say that no matter what reports he would put in on particular occasions the duffers would not believe him.

From my experience the officers do not attend to their duties sufficiently early. They do not enter on them till near 10 o'clock, and the paupers have the house in their own hands practically up to them.

Saturday 20th.

J. M^rA. PORTER, Examination continued.

On the rough discharge book I had make marks against the names of those persons who were returned as in the house when they were not so. These marks were made before I left the house. In looking at the book now I find that marks of a similar kind have since been made against a variety of other names, obviously for the purposes of confusing.

To Captain *W. H. H.*] I kept the relief list up correctly during the time I was in the office.

The second occasion when I saw the master under the influence of drink was one evening in his office. The only thing I saw about him was that I could not understand

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him. Mr. Weir, whom I asked about it, said in reply, with a strong expression, "Don't you see the man is screwed."

The paper I saw the pauper sign was a docket receipt for coals.

I saw, whilst in the workhouse, a pauper man keeping the provision check, and the last week I kept it for Mr. Weir myself. That pauper's name was, I believe, M'Manus.

To Mr. Weir,] The storekeeper was the person to whom I referred as taking extracts from the master's books.

It was generally of an evening, but I cannot state the hours that Mr. Weir was occupied at his games.

John M. Porter.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 20th November 1880.

R. Bewke, L.G.I.

DAVID TAYLOR, SWORN, and Examined by Mr. Stewart.

There have been numerous complaints against the master. Some of them have been sustained and some have not. The board of guardians have ordered a return of these complaints, which can be put in.

I had rather not answer the question as to whether I think the Local Government Board should have confirmed the suspension of the master which was pronounced by the board.

I am aware that on several occasions there have been errors discovered as to the number of inmates of the house as returned on the books and those actually in it.

I have known the master frequently to order goods without the authority of the board. I have known several instances where bills have been sent in for goods supplied, which the clerk has not felt at liberty to submit for payment, as there were no board orders. There are many cases where goods may be immediately wanted, and the board do not object to their being procured if a report is duly made of the proceeding at the next meeting. But that has been neglected and no order obtained.

I remember a complaint being made of the master not acting in reference to the sale of old clothes in the manner directed by the board of guardians. I think that complaint was substantiated. There were representations made by the auctioneer and the public who attended on that occasion, and were delayed, and claimed damages for loss of time, as the sale did not take place owing to the want of preparation on the master's part. The resolution now read, in which the guardians require the master to pay the auctioneer's charges, is correct. Whether he did so or not I cannot say, but I am satisfied by the clerk's statement now made that the union has not paid their expenses.

There was an instance lately of a pauper inmate who, having been ordered by the board to be discharged, was allowed to remain in the house. As well as I remember, the master attributed this to oversight.

I know a case in which the board, having made an order for yarn about a fortnight before the expiration of the contract, the master failed to obtain delivery of the goods within the period of the contract, and the extra cost which had to be paid was 3 l.

I remember the master admitting that he had broken some panes of glass in a shed, as he said for ventilation. I do not know how many. There were a great many broken. It is an old story.

I am aware that the result of the last stock-taking has been to show large deficiencies in some articles and large surplus in others. I refer to the stock-taking at close of last half year. It was carried out by a committee who sent in a return, and the board of guardians having asked the advice of the Local Government Board, they were informed that the surplus in goods should be credited to the union in the accounts, and the deficiencies dealt with by the auditor.

I believe the master sleeps in the workhouse, except when he has obtained the guardians' leave to sleep in his own house. I think it is only on such occasions that he sleeps out. During the repairs of the master's apartments, which are still in progress, he has slept in his own house. The master reported to the board his doing so, and there was no order made.

A complaint of gross insubordination was made last June by the master against the assistant matron, whose explanation having been called for and received, was pronounced by the board to be satisfactory.

The master did not report to the board the death of some pigs when it occurred. So far, at least, as I remember, and the loss was, I believe, not known by the guardians until the time of the pigs being sold.

I remember a resolution of the board prohibiting the employment of pauper labour in the master's office. It arose from the discovery, when the guardians were investigating the discrepancy of workhouse inmates as between the books and the actual numbers, that one of the books was in charge of a pauper inmate. I am not aware of the order having been violated in spirit.

My impression is, that as long as matters remain at present, there is little expectation of peace in the workhouse. What I mean is because there is so large a section of the board

board hostile to Captain Whittle. But as regards the internal arrangements of the house as controlled and conducted by him, I think they are all satisfactory. And I further state my opinion, that if the master would put a check upon his tongue, and be more kind and conciliatory, and show a little more sympathy for the sufferings of the poor, I think he would be a satisfactory officer.

I believe him to be a strictly honest and straightforward man. I believe he has failed in respect to the exercise of temper and the use of proper language, not only towards inmates, contractors, and officers, but also towards members of the board. But instances have not taken place in my presence, and I speak only from hearsay.

To the Master.] I do not remember the master having reported in his journal the death of one of the pigs, but I remember his saying he had reported the animal's death to Mr. Biggar, one of the guardians connected with the provision trade, and, I think, a member of our farm committee, and that gentleman, who was present, confirmed this.

The excuse made by the master for not having the east clothing prepared in lots for sale was, that by a resolution of the board it had been left to a committee to prepare those lots, and that the members had not attended. It was subsequently to that (about a month or six weeks ago) that that resolution was rescinded.

The practice as to giving board orders to contractors is, that when the guardians have agreed to get the goods, an order is made out, which it is the clerk's duty to transmit. It was alleged to have been omitted in the case of the yarn, and my objection is not founded on this, but on the fact of the master's not seeing that the order for the goods was duly carried out.

The glass which was broken was in a little store once a part of the separation ward.

To Dr. Brodie.] Can you name any particular instance in which the master has shown any want of sympathy to the poor?

I refer chiefly to the people left outside the gate of a night. But am bound to say I have had no complaints made to me of that kind from any inmate.

David Taylor.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd of November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.S.

J. B. WHITTLE, Master of the Workhouse, sworn; Examined by Mr. Stewart.

Do you remember the case of a boy named Deherity, who, about the month of May last, absconded with the workhouse clothes?—Yes.

Is it the fact that a woman brought the boy to the workhouse for the purpose of giving him up to you, after he had absconded?—Yes.

Did you refuse to admit him?—No. But I told her that, as I had reported the case to the police, it was now in their hands, and I would not interfere.

Is there a fixed number of pauper nurses allowed by the guardians to receive extra rations, and is that number exceeded?—It is not.

Do you know if there are, in point of fact, any unauthorised persons receiving extra rations?—I cannot say, for I do not know.

Do you know that since the present inquiry was ordered, persons have been removed from the list who were not authorised to receive them?—I do not. I do not know there were any unauthorised persons receiving them.

Were not the cleaners in the school struck off too?—I do not know, nor do I know they were ever in receipt of it.

Was a report made to you that 100 unauthorised persons were in receipt of tea?—Some weeks ago I heard that some persons in the school were getting tea, and I spoke to Mr. Cherry about it, and pointed out that they should not get it without authority. I did not report it to the guardians.

Paupers were never permitted to carry pass keys. They might be given one by an officer for occasional use, but never were allowed to carry them.

I employed Mr. Porter on Mr. Cherry's recommendation, considering him a competent man. After he had left we found out he had falsified the relief list. He was acting for Mr. Kinnear, and after Mr. Kinnear returned he reported to me that the book had been falsified. Before this was discovered I had spoken in the strongest terms in favour of him. After it was discovered your opinion changed.

From what I have heard of these falsifications from the men in the office I think they occurred through Mr. Porter's incapacity in some degree and also wilfully.

Before Mr. Kinnear left he spoke to me unfavourably of Mr. Porter's capacity, but I said I would give him a trial.

I did not test the correctness of Mr. Porter's work even after this. The relief list was duly checked by the clerk. I would not undertake to keep the book, nor could I feel competent to detect errors in it quickly, and without much labour.

I wrote the certificate of the 8th June, giving him a good character, and expressing the opinion that he was master of the accounts, what I thought was true at the time, but do not think so now.

I would most certainly have reported about Mr. Porter and the books, whether he had made a representation of the irregularities in my office or not.

I did not send Mr. Cherry to Mr. Porter, and I do not know whether he was sent at all, or who sent him.

The letter put into my hands was written by me, it is dated 31st July, and contains these words, "I am quite ignorant of any charge being made against you in any way reflecting on your character." As regards this, I can only say, I think, I had in my mind some stories said to be reported by Mr. Porter outside the house.

I did not write that letter with the intention of preventing Mr. Porter exposing the irregularities of my office.*

There is a pauper man in my office named James Johnston, employed in filling up tickets. Another man, Alexander Clarke, works in the bath, and only comes to the office to get register numbers as far as I know. What I understand the resolution of the board to mean is that no pauper shall be allowed to keep the books. The report of the committee, on which Mr. Cherry was appointed, declared one of its objects in increasing the staff, to be the discontinuance of pauper labour in the master's office.

I reside on the workhouse premises, except with leave, or when, as now, my apartments are under repair. I have always done so. When first in office I used to sleep out sometimes without previous leave, and report it afterwards, but exception having been taken to this I gave it up.

Do you allow provisions to be carried out of this house by your servant?—She does take some things—some of my rations—some few things. It is done without special orders from me, but with my knowledge.

Do you know that is against the orders of the board of guardians?—I know the guardians objected to it.

I did not give the porter orders for this woman to go out unsuited, or without any molestation of any kind. I don't remember giving any orders of that kind.

I know a pauper called Benson. I do not remember admitting her, and her remaining in the house without the express sanction of the board of guardians. I cannot say if she is now in the house without the guardians' authority. She has often appeared before the guardians, and I have often urged the chairman not to admit her as being able bodied.

The assistant master discharges his duties well. He is capable of doing his duties, though I have reported him more than once.

J. B. Whitla.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.I.

Tuesday, 23rd November.

J. B. WHITLA—Examination continued.

I wish to give some further explanations in reference to the evidence as it concerns me, that was given yesterday.

As regards the statement about the books, I hereby state that I feel quite competent to keep them if I was relieved from other duties.

When I wrote the letter of the 31st July, although I knew there were errors in Mr. Porter's book, I did not believe then, as I do now, that they were deliberately made.

As master of the workhouse I knew nothing about the alleged discrepancy in the recorded numbers in the house, and those actually in it, referred to by Mr. Porter. I do not believe his statement to be true as regards the discrepancy existing in the number while he was in the house, and which he says he detected.

I got a copy of the letter of the Local Government Board, 27th May 1880, stating that I was in future to consider myself strictly responsible for the relief list and all accounts in my office.

The stories which I referred to as in circulation outside the house, with reference to Mr. Porter, related partly at least to his discharge of duties in the workhouse. I cannot say if they were all connected with it.

J. B. Whitla, Master.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 23rd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.I.

JAMES RUTHERFORD, Gate Porter, sworn.

I am gate porter. I remember the time Mr. Porter was here. I remember his giving me some dockets by desire of Mr. Weir; they were dockets of discharge. The practice is that when inmates are being discharged, they bring down their dockets and I file them. In the case now under consideration there were an inmate left the Workhouse. I did not look attentively at the dockets and cannot say how many there were or whom they referred to.

* Mr. Porter's report is dated 6th September.

to. I never let any inmate out without such a docket. I can give no explanation of these dockets, but Mr Porter told me he was regulating Mr. Weir's books before leaving the workhouse.

I do not remember whether I said to Mr. Porter on that occasion "has this occurred again?" Mr. Weir had brought the same sort of dockets a few days before without any people coming with them.

About two years ago Captain White gave me orders to permit his servant to pass in and out. Pauper inmates going out are, as a rule, required to show their paper, and to be searched. I have acted on those orders since, and sometimes his servant passes out twice and three times a day.

To Captain White.] I do not search females. This is done by a female searcher who attends in my lodge some hours each day. There are no discharges except at those hours scarcely. Inmates going out after those hours are not searched. There are not many at all going out after those hours.

James Rutherford.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 23rd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.L.

ADAM S. WEIR, sworn.

I am assistant workhouse master, and have held the place upwards of three years. My duties are to keep the clothing books, the provision books, and do general office work.

I remember when Mr. Porter was here that some inaccuracies being detected on the books, some parties appearing there who were not actually in the house, I took down discharge dockets to Mr. Rutherford. This was in correction of the error. The names on those dockets being taken off the books, and the dockets serving as a check on the discharge book. There were errors discovered in Mr. Porter's time as regarded numbers. I have no means of knowing the extent of those errors; they were very slight, at all events, and were on both sides. I do not remember if there was any error in gross numbers, but confusions in names, arising from a variety of causes, are of frequent occurrence, and give much trouble in their adjustment; for instance, persons giving wrong names on admission from one cause or other, and such things. There is a comparison periodically of actual names and numbers by means of the roll calls, and any errors then are immediately corrected. I cannot say there was or there was not such a discrepancy in Mr. Porter's time.

To Mr. Stewart.] James Johnston, a pauper, renders occasional assistance in the master's office. He assists in checking our books with another when it is required, and writes tickets. He does not make up any books.

To Dr. Brodie.] No pauper makes entries in the provision check. I do all myself, and the book is duly checked by the clerk.

The comparison of numbers is carried out periodically every half year, and one was going on when Mr. Porter came.

Andrew Mawhinny, a pauper, assists me in my work. This he does in my own private apartment. I do not pay him for this, but have assisted him when he was leaving the house to seek employment.

Alexander Clark has rendered me assistance in my general duties. The master knows of assistance to this extent. He has never objected to it.

To Captain White.] I do not believe the master was aware of Mawhinny working in my private room.

I heard what Mr. Porter swore as to the master being under the influence of drink one day in the office, and my making some remark about it. I deny the thing totally, and defy Mr. Porter to bring any one forward who ever heard me use the expressions he states.

I understand the resolution of the guardians prohibiting the employment of pauper labour in the workhouse to refer to their keeping the books, and this resolution has been complied with since, and they have never been allowed to do so.

Adam S. Weir, Assistant Master,
23rd November 1880.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 23rd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.L.

JAMES KINNEAR, sworn.

I am assistant clerk in the master's office.

I remember the time Mr. Porter was here. I was on leave. My special duties are to keep the admission and discharge book, and the relief list and abstract. I did not hand them over to Mr. Porter. I gave him no charge, but he entered the office before I left.

I returned, I believe, on the 7th June, and resumed work. Mr. Porter was then in the house, but we had no conversation regarding the books.

A few days after I had commenced I found Mr. Porter had made erroneous entries; that is, he had charged days as being passed in the workhouse in excess of what had been passed, and in reduction of them. This I discovered by comparison of the books.

The list I now put in shows the errors committed. Some persons were charged more days in the workhouse than they had actually passed, and others less. The aggregate of days was right, but the particulars of which the aggregate was composed was wrong.

During the first week of my return I reported these discrepancies to the master.

James Johnson assists Mr. Weir. He does it by filling up tickets issued to paupers on admission. This he does by making extracts from the register. Also he makes out discharge tickets. He is familiar with the books, having been a long time in the office. The master sees him at this work.

Can you say that Mr. Porter falsified the books intentionally?—I conceive he did, as I have noticed numbers changed for the purpose, as it seems to me, of making the numbers tally.

I believe Mr. Porter did not thoroughly understand the books.

On the Tuesday week following I reported it in the board room.

I was told by Mr. Cherry that he was sent down by the master to Mr. Porter for the purpose of asking him not to bring forward his charges. I was no party to this proceeding. Mr. Cherry told me about it shortly after it happened.

Is it true, according to your knowledge, that the master does not enter on his duties till 10 o'clock?—That is my impression. I do not think it is true, as alleged by Mr. Porter, that he generally comes from the direction of his own residence. I believe he goes to his own house for breakfast, and it may be when returning that Mr. Porter saw him.

I believe the master's rations generally go out to his house. But when the master is away he uses them in the house.

I have frequently seen the master under the influence of drink, but not incapable of discharging his duties. I judged by his violent manner, and the nature of his expressions. Generally about nine o'clock in the evening.

To Captain *Whitla*.] The master could easily be about the house in the morning without my seeing him or knowing anything about it. He might be there at four o'clock in the morning.

I am not prepared to indicate or name any particular date when I saw the master under the influence of drink. I would say it is of common occurrence.

It is only by inference I speak of the master's sending out his rations.

When I see the master coming up at 10 o'clock, I come to the conclusion he is coming to enter on his duties. But he may have been engaged on them before without my knowing it. I conclude that the master takes his meals at his own house, because, as I pass his kitchen door, going to my own, I see no preparation for his.

James Kinnear.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 23rd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

JACOB A. CHERRY, SWORN.

I am diet clerk of the workhouse, and have held the office for a year next January.

Since I came there have been comparisons between the numbers in the house and on the books. The roll call and relief lists were checked. Some discrepancies were found and rectified.

I was not sent expressly by Captain *Whitla* to Messrs. Dohhins to see Mr. Porter, but he knew of my going to him. I first suggested it to him. Mr. Porter had been writing letters to the master and clerk, intimating that he heard stories were in circulation about him of an unfavourable kind, and that unless they were put an end to, he would report the irregularities in the workhouse, of which he was cognizant. Thereupon I suggested my going down to Mr. Porter and asking him not to write such letters. Mr. Porter complained that he could not go about the town without hearing it said he had messed the books. I said he had done so to a certain extent. The upshot of our interview was that he promised to write no more letters, but he subsequently broke his promise.

The master said, on my return, that it was all right. I assured the master there would be no more heard of it. There were no stories going about Mr. Porter, as far as I have heard, except in connexion with the books.

To Captain *Whitla*.] It was in the dining-hall that the conversation with the master took place. He had been telling me of having that morning received a letter from Mr. Porter, and I suggested my going down and speaking to him about it. He is a distant sort of connexion of ours.

I heard Mr. Porter say that I had seen the master under the influence of drink the night we were counting the house, but I observed nothing of the kind on him that night.

To

To the *Inspector*.] I have at no time seen Captain Whitla under the influence of drink. I have opportunities of seeing him at all times.

I have seen Captain Whitla pretty often as early as nine o'clock in the morning, but not as a rule; however he may be there without my knowing.

Jacob A. Cherry.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 23rd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

WILLIAM F. BOYCE, SWORN.

I am Clerk of the Union.

I checked the relief list left by Mr. Porter in the same manner as I always have done.

I check the relief lists with the collective days in the provisions check, which has been previously checked with the diet books.

No discrepancies were found. I have gone through some of the particulars deposed to by Mr. Kinnear and found his statements correct, but these discrepancies did not affect the abstract of the relief list, and it is only with this abstract I have to deal when checking the accounts. The union was at no loss by the discrepancies.

My business has been greatly increased by the frequency of complaints made both against the master and also by him. This has been felt in the augmented correspondence and other similar work.

I was ordered by the guardians to give a return of the complaints made against the master, and have done so. I handed it to the inspectors. It makes a very bulky volume, and I had occasion to ask for paid assistance to compile it, which was granted.

To Captain *Whitla*.] I do not think the master, at the present moment, competent to keep the relief list, but I think he or any other man might learn to do it.

I spoke in the highest terms of Mr. Porter as he was leaving, but I was sadly deceived in the result.

Wm. F. Boyce.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 23rd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

EVIDENCE AS REGARDS CHARGES by Mr. S. D. Frew, against the Master of the Workhouse and Relieving Officer Hewitt.

SAMUEL D. FREW, SWORN.

I reside in Joy-street, Belfast.

On the night of Friday, the 1st of October, at about half-past nine o'clock, I was going up the Lisburn-road, and on reaching the workhouse gate, my attention was called to a number of people lying on the ground before the gate. I went over to them, and found they were men, women, and children, all huddled up together. I inquired into their circumstances, and whilst doing so, the Rev. Mr. Whyte came up. Immediately afterwards, Captain Whitla came to the workhouse gate, from the direction of Wilmont-terrace. Mr. Whyte, asked if the people could be admitted, but Captain Whitla, answered that they could not without a line (meaning as I believe, a relieving officer's ticket). After some conversation between Mr. Whyte and Captain Whitla on the subject of these people, the former asked me would I go with the people to the relieving officer. I replied that I would, and I took down the names of all the people waiting at the gate, and proceeded with them to the relieving officer's residence, in Lavinia-street, and saw Mr. Hewitt, the relieving officer. I respectfully asked him if the people could have a line to admit them to the workhouse. Upon this, Mr. Hewitt, in a state of great excitement, began to abuse us. He said it was low, mean, and impudent in me to interfere with him about paupers, and that if we did not all leave the street he would send for the police and have us removed. None of these present, neither I nor any of the poor people were giving any offence to the relieving officer.

I concluded from Mr. Hewitt's extraordinary state of excitement that he was under the influence of drink. He did not take down the people's names or make any inquiry of them.

As we were leaving, a man named Johnson, who was one of the poor persons, pressed forward and begged Mr. Hewitt, for God's sake, to give him a line, and Mr. Hewitt replied that, as he was not with the women, he would do so. He retired to his home and came out with the paper accordingly.

We then returned to the workhouse gate. The following are the names of the persons who accompanied me to the relieving officer :—

Mrs. M'Ilwaine and two infant children,
Sarah Slevin,
And the man Johnson.

M'Ilwaine being very unwell, and unable to walk with us to the relieving officer, who lives about a mile from the workhouse, had remained lying at the workhouse gate.

We returned to the workhouse where we arrived about 10.45. Captain Whittle was outside the entrance gate. I told him we had been to the relieving officer and had been unsuccessful in getting the limes, and I asked him to allow Mrs. M'Ilwaine in with her two infant children. He replied he would have nothing to do with them, as the relieving officer had taken the responsibility off his shoulders, adding, "Let them lie down there." I told Captain Whittle it would be a serious matter if any of the children should die during the night, but he replied, "Let them die there."

It was then a few minutes to eleven o'clock, and beginning to rain. I left them, seeing I could do no more, and told them if they did not get in to come to me in the morning and I would take them to some of the guardians.

At about ten o'clock on the following morning I met James M'Ilwaine, his wife, and two children coming, as I believe, to me. They presented a horrible appearance, and were black in the face with cold.

I took them to the office of the chairman of the board of guardians, Mr. Taylor, but he was not at home. I then took them to Mr. Clegg, a guardian. I explained to him what had taken place. He accompanied us to the relief office in Barrack-street, and saw Mr. Hewitt, who, after being told by Mr. Clegg that if he did not relieve them he would himself support them until the next board day, he agreed to give them a lime, and he did so.

On my second visit to the workhouse at 10.45 the master, Captain Whittle, was under the influence of drink.

To Captain Whittle.] I swear the words used by the master were, "Let them die there." It was then a few minutes to eleven, and was just beginning to rain. I got ninepence from Mr. White to get them food. I divided it amongst the four before going up to Lavinia-street.

I never knew M'Ilwaine, nor had I seen Mr. White before, nor the workhouse master.

It was by the master's inarticulate mode of speaking, and by the unsteadiness of his gait, that I came to the conclusion he was under the influence of drink. But he spoke articulately enough to make me certain of his words, "Let them die there." The night was dreadfully cold, and in the latter part of the night it froze hard.

To Mr. Hewitt.] I have no recollection of hearing Mr. Hewitt say that the M'Ilwaines had applied to him early on that day, but I knew it from their own lips.

I recollect his saying something about Mr. Monico, the other relieving officer. He said it was his duty, as the people resided in his district. I am quite certain Mr. Hewitt said he would send for the police and have us all removed.

I could come to no other rational conclusion from Mr. Hewitt's excited manner, and also his appearance, but that he was under the influence of drink.

Mr. Hewitt did not ask Johnson any questions. All he said was what I have already stated.

On the 2nd October, and for about ten days after, I did reside at No. 31, Joy-street, from where I dated my letter.

Samuel D. Frew.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 20th of November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

Since giving my evidence I have heard Mr. White's testimony, and wish to say in explanation of my giving the poor people the money before reaching Lavinia-street, or ascertaining if their story was true, that I did so because the man Johnson complained to me, whilst passing a grocer's shop, that he had had nothing to eat that day, and I gave him threepence and he went in, and I know he got a pennyworth of bread, but do not know what he did with the rest. Afterwards I gave Sarah Slevin twopence, and Mrs. M'Ilwaine got the remainder.

Samuel D. Frew.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 20th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

The Reverend B. N. WHITE, sworn.

I am a clergyman of the Church of Ireland, and reside in Belfast.

I concur generally with the evidence of Mr. Frew in reference to the proceedings, as I saw them at the gate of the workhouse. And I wish to state that it was solely at my request that Mr. Frew went to the relieving officer.

I had

I had been before then doing duty at St. Luke's, and it was my habit frequently to pass the workhouse gate at night. I thought it my duty, whenever I saw any people there, to go over and speak to them. I found, almost invariably, that the people had not got "lines" or could not get them. And at first, during the time Mr. Watts was master, I was in the habit of going to him and asking him to admit them, which he often did. I made similar applications to Captain Whitla and was almost invariably refused. I then gave up applying to Captain Whitla and was in the habit of giving to those whom I found at the gate 2d. a head in money, on an average.

I have observed a marked change in matters since Mr. Frew's case was inquired into by the board of guardians. And whereas before I used often to see a number of persons every week night I passed outside the workhouse gate, I have since that time seen none.

On the night when I met Mr. Frew at the gate, I gave the money to him and not, as usual, to the people themselves, because they said they had applied for "lines" from the relieving officer and been refused, and I wanted him to see whether they were humbugs in this before he gave them anything. I did not know Mr. Frew. The time was between nine and ten.

I think Captain Whitla's manner, both on the night in question and on other occasions, was very harsh towards the poor.

To Captain [Whitla.] The time was about a quarter or half-past nine. I believe, after speaking to me, that Captain Whitla went inside the workhouse gate. I will not swear that Mr. Frew was present when Captain Whitla spoke to me through the gate, but neither will I swear that he was not.

As far as I saw, Captain Whitla was then perfectly sober.

B. N. White, Clerk.

JAMES McILWAINE, sworn.

I am between twenty-nine and thirty years of age, and was born in Lurgan. I am a labourer and weaver.

I was in Belfast looking for work in October last. My wife was with me. We have been ten years married, and have two children surviving. I was not successful in getting work, and I applied to the relieving officer, Hewitt, about six o'clock on the evening now in question. I and my wife went to his house in Lavinia-street. We saw him in the street, as he was going to his house, and spoke to him. He asked us why we had not applied at the office. I told him I had been all day looking for work and thought it too late on my return. He told me he would give me no "lines." He gave no further reason. I had seen him before—I had been in Belfast Workhouse before for two nights. It was more than six weeks before.

On being refused by the relieving officer, my wife and I went down to the workhouse gate, and waited there till we saw Captain Whitla. We saw no one before then to whom we could apply. Captain Whitla came out of the workhouse gate after we had been there about an hour and-a-half. I asked him for admission. He inquired if I had "lines," and I said not. He refused us admission as we had not "lines." He told us to sit down and warm ourselves, and that he saw nothing urgent in our case. He then went straight into his own house, and at about nine o'clock the Rev. Mr. White came up and spoke to us. Whilst he was doing so, Mr. Frew came up, and had some conversation with Mr. White, and it was settled that Mr. Frew should take us to the relieving officer. I was too tired after my day's walk to go, but I kept one of the children, and my wife took the other. I saw Mr. White give Mr. Frew some money.

After Mr. Frew returned with my wife and the others, Captain Whitla came from his house; Mr. White had gone away. Captain Whitla and Mr. Frew talked together. Mr. Frew asked him to let us in, and Captain Whitla told him to mind his own business. Mr. Frew observed that some of the children might die if left there, and he replied, "Let them die there."

Captain Whitla went into the workhouse gate, and I remained outside with my wife and children all the night.

Next day we were admitted, as Mr. Frew has stated.

On the following Monday the man over the stone-breakers told me our time was up, and we must go, so we went. About a week after (which we passed at Carrowkill, near the town) my wife and children went to Scotland to try and see her uncle, and I do not know where she now is, and I went to Lurgan, where I got employment.

Captain Whitla did not scold or abuse us, or use bad language, when he refused us. He was under the influence of drink. I judged so, as I saw him trip over the woman Slevin, as she sat at the gate.

To Mr. Hewitt.] Mr. Hewitt asked my wife, when first we met him, where she came from, and she said from Lurgan. He asked me where we had stopped the previous night, and I said Pipe-lane. He told us where we ought to go to apply for relief.

To Mr. Frew.] On the Wednesday previous to these occasions, I and my wife and children passed the whole of the night outside the workhouse gate. We were refused

refused because we had no lines. We had not gone to the relieving officer on that night.

We paid for our lodgings in Pipe-lane, out of 6 d. obtained from my wife's uncle.

The time I passed in the workhouse, before the present occasion, was only two nights, about six weeks before it, on our first arrival at Belfast.

For a week after our discharge from the workhouse on the last occasion we were supported by money from Mr. Frew.

My wife told me she got some money from Mr. Frew on the night we were at the gate, but she did not tell me how much. She had not spent it; she had it in her pocket all the time we were lying at the gate. We got our breakfast with it next morning.

I said the master was "tottering" in the street, by which I meant "staggering."

Jas. (his + mark) *M'Ilwayne*.

Witness—*T. Brodie*.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 20th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

SARAH SLEVIN, sworn.

I am seventeen years of age and unmarried. I am working at the Tea-lane mill. I remember being at the workhouse gate with the *M'Ilwaynes* on the night now in question. It was about half-past nine when I got there, and the *M'Ilwaynes* were there. Whilst we were there Mr. White came up, and afterwards Mr. Frew. Captain Whitla came from his own house towards the workhouse, and he and Mr. Frew spoke together. As far as I can remember, Mr. White had gone. Captain Whitla refused to let me in as I had no "lines." I said I had applied and been refused.

After our return from Lavinia-street we saw the master. Mr. Frew asked him to take us in there, and he refused. I heard him say, "Let them die there, then."

It was my opinion that Captain Whitla was under the influence of drink. I thought so because when first he came up to see the smell of drink was so strong on him it nearly "took the breath of me."

Mr. Frew gave me twopence. I did not stay beyond twelve o'clock at the workhouse gate that night. It was teeming with rain.

My mother had kept me up to that night, but had no longer the means of keeping me. I am staying there now, and earning 8 s. a week at Tea-lane mill.

To Captain *Whitla*.] I only came twice before alone to the workhouse, and was admitted without "lines." I was not lying across the gate that night. The master did not tumble over me. The first time I saw the master go into the workhouse was after we came from Lavinia-street. The master did not trip over me, nor did he trip over anyone else, as far as I know.

To Mr. *Hewitt*.] Between four and five o'clock of that day Mr. Hewitt had put down my name. I cannot say he was under the influence of drink when I went to Lavinia-street with Mr. Frew. I appeared before the board on the following Tuesday with my two little sisters. I did not want to come in myself, for in the interval I had obtained work; but the sisters were admitted.

When I left the workhouse on Friday night I slept in an empty house of my father's. My father was then in prison, and is so still. My mother could not afford to keep me. I had been sleeping there on the floor. There were no beds in the house. The bedding had all been pawned.

Sarah (her + mark) *Slevin*.

Witness—*T. Brodie*.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 20th November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.I.

ARTHUR HEWITT, sworn.

I am relieving officer, and reside in Lavinia-street. I have held my office for almost four years.

I remember the night of the 1st October, and Mr. Frew coming to my house with some people. There was a knock at the hall door very near ten o'clock, to the best of my recollection. I was writing in the kitchen, at the time, making up my book of outdoor relief. On opening the door I saw Mr. Frew and Mrs. *M'Ilwayne*, Sarah Slevin, and a poor man named Smith.

Mr. Frew asked me to give the people lines of admission to the workhouse. I informed him that the *M'Ilwayne* family had been with me in the early part of the evening, and that I had told Mrs. *M'Ilwayne* the name of the officer and his address in whose district they had resided, and who would have to inquire into their cases. He urged me to give the tickets, and I stated that according to the regulations of the Local Government Board it

it was the duty of the officer in whose districts they resided to inquire into the case, and that about half-past six that evening, when I had told them this, they should have gone and applied to him.

I spoke to the girl Slevin, telling her that she had got her name down on that day in the books, with a view to her appearing before the guardians on the next board day (Tuesday). She was giving some loud talk to me, but I do not remember what it was.

I then spoke to the man Smith, and learned all his particulars, and went in and wrote him an order. These orders are laid before the board when the case comes forward, but are not preserved longer. I entered the case in the application and report book next morning, that book being kept at the relief office.

I am a married man. My wife and two children live with me in the house.

I utterly deny the statement of Mr. Frew that I abused him or the people with him. I did not say it was "low, mean, and impertinent" in him to intercede with me for paupers. What I said was that I had a duty to perform and would carry it out.

It is not true that I threatened to send for the police if they would not leave the place. It is not true that the man Smith (called Johnson in Mr. Frew's deposition) called on me for God's sake to give him an order. There was no particular appeal made to me by the man. Mr. Frew commenced to state his case, and I said he could speak for himself, and proceeded to take his statement.

I swear that I never tasted drink of any kind on that day. I had been at home from half-past six. I had tea with my family shortly after I came in. No one was with me in the house that night except the witness, Camlin. To the best of my knowledge there was no spirits or anything of the kind in the house that night.

I was, less or more, annoyed at any one coming and interfering in my business, but I said nothing about it.

The only reason I had for refusing the application of the McIlwaines was that I had referred them to the proper relieving officer at half-past six on that day. I remember nothing about them before they met me in the street. I do not remember whether I asked Mr. McIlwaine if he had been to the other relieving officer. I had no reason to doubt they had come from the workhouse gate. I do not remember them saying the master had refused them, but I remember Mr. Frew saying so. I cannot say I had any grounds for believing the family had any means for getting their lodging that night. Mr. Frew mentioned something of a clergyman named Smith in reference to their cases.

[Mr. Frew here interposed to say that he had used that name by mistake, thinking at the time it was borne by Mr. White.]

Sarah Slevin was a constant runner in and out of the workhouse, whom I knew well. Many a time I had visited her house. It is a very wretched place. I did not know at the time that her father was in prison. Her application to me was made on Friday. She did not ask for immediate admission. She did not seem dissatisfied with having to wait till Tuesday. On the Monday following she applied to me with her sisters. On the next day, being board day, the sisters were admitted, but she said she did not want it for herself.

To Dr. Bradie.] I cannot say if I should have issued a ticket that night for the McIlwaines if they had belonged to my district.

I am not aware of any rule or order of the board of guardians prohibiting my giving provisional relief to persons not belonging to our district.

It did not occur to me when the girl, Slevin, came to me that evening that, although she had not asked for immediate admission when making her application in the course of the day, the circumstances of her case had altered then, and that the order should be given for her admission. I knew her well, and heard her say before, when refused provisional relief, that she would go to the workhouse gate and breed a row if she did not get the order.

I know nothing against Sarah Slevin's moral character.

Arthur Hewitt.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.I.

WILLIAM MILLS, sworn.

I reside at No. 1, Essex-street, and am a bread server in the employment of Mr. R. Wilson, Cromac-street, Belfast.

I remember the evening of the 1st October. At half-past six o'clock on that evening I met Mr. Hewitt in Cromac-street. He was perfectly sober.

William Mills.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.I.

MARTHA CAMLIN, sworn.

I am a widow, residing at 39, Outram-street. I am a householder.

I remember being at Mr. Hewitt's house in Lavinia-street, about nine o'clock, on the evening of the 1st October. I was there for nearly an hour. We were in the same room. He was engaged writing. When he had finished, he spoke to me on my business. About half-past nine I left his house. I saw no appearance of liquor about the house. There was none in the room where we were, and Mr. Hewitt was engaged writing. There was no appearance of drink on Mr. Hewitt, or no smell of it.

Sarah (ber + mark) Camlin.

Witness—*T. Brodie.*

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.J.

ALBERT EWING, sworn.

I am school porter; on the night of the 1st October I was acting for the gate porter. No application was made to me by the McIlwayne family for admission that night.

The master came to the gate that night between nine and half-past nine. Mr. White and Mr. Frew and several persons were there at the gate. The master came from the direction of Wilmont-terrace. He spoke to one woman. Mr. White spoke to the master, and asked would he allow the people in. The master said he would let them all in whenever they got lines. Mr. White said the people had applied for lines, and could not get them. The master said that was nonsense; that if they went to Mr. Hewitt they could get lines even at that hour. Mr. White asked if it was not too late, and he said not, and gave Mr. Hewitt's address. The master passed on to the house.

Mr. Frew was at the gate when the master passed in. This was about half-past nine or so. Between ten and a quarter-past ten I saw the master again. He passed out of the gate. Mr. McIlwayne and one of the children was there then. Mr. Frew met the master as he passed out of the gate. He had returned then from the relieving officer. Mr. Frew said, "I beg your pardon, Captain, but I have come from the relieving officer." "Well," said the Captain. Just at that time I had admitted Smith on the relieving officer's order. "Why, look here," said the Captain, "here is a man who has just got his order of admission from the relieving officer, and how does it come he has not given the same to them?" Mr. Frew, after a few minutes' reflection, answered that he did not know; and the master said he presumed Hewitt knew his business best. He then walked on to his own residence in Wilmont-terrace. Mr. Frew went away.

About eleven or ten minutes past, I saw the master again, and he passed up to the workhouse.

When Mr. Frew was with the master the last time I never heard him urge the master to let the people in, and say as regarded the children that if they were left out they might die there. The master never said, "Then let them die there," or any words of the kind.

I saw the master three times that night, and, on my oath, he was not under the influence of drink at any of those times.

Albert Ewing.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.J.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER DUNNE, sworn.

I am resident medical officer in the Infirmary.

On Friday night, October the 1st, I was coming into the workhouse at about a quarter-past ten p.m. After I came in I met Dr. Watt, and whilst talking to him the master came up, and I saw no signs of intoxication about him.

Notwithstanding the fact that my name did not appear on the gate porter's book on that night as having been out of the workhouse or returning to it, I am prepared to swear that it was on a night when Mr. Frew was at the workhouse gate that I so passed in.

My name has since been inserted on that book, though on the Tuesday week after the 1st October when I looked at the book it was not there. It might have been several days after that I found my name had been inserted. The gate porter did not ask me the hour of my return. He put one down, and it was not a correct time that he inserted.

[Mr. Ewing being re-called and examined as to the entry having been made in the book at a distance of several days from the time to which it referred, says he thought it was no harm.

He admits having made an alteration also in the figures.]

I have only seen Mr. Frew once at the workhouse gate. He may have been there oftener than once for anything I know.

William Alexander Dunne.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.G.J.

WILLIAM GILMORE, sworn.

I am hall porter of the workhouse.

I remember the night of the 1st of October. I saw the master at about ten minutes past nine on that evening. I saw him again about twenty or thirty minutes past ten, going out of the workhouse. I cannot recall to mind his coming back into the house that particular night. He visits the gate and returns about that time every night.

The master was perfectly sober on every occasion when I saw him that night.

William Gilmore.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.I.

J. B. WHITLA, sworn.

I have been four years, this week, master of this workhouse.

At half-past nine o'clock on the 1st October last, when I was coming in from Wilmont-terrace (or about that time), in going round I observed some people about the gate talking to Mr. Frew and the Reverend Mr. White. Mr. White asked me could the people not get admission, and I replied, "if they get relieving officer's line I will take them all in." I made some inquiries from the people themselves, and the woman M'Dwayne said she had been in the workhouse before. The husband, an able-bodied man, was standing at some distance from her.

My reason for not admitting those persons on my own responsibility was, that I saw nothing sudden or urgent in the case. The woman was fairly dressed, the man able-bodied. I saw one child at the woman's foot, but I observed no infant in arms then. It was a fine night, mild for the season, and not raining.

After remaining some time in the workhouse, I passed out again to Wilmont-terrace, about half-past ten or so. Mr. Frew and the M'Dwaynes were then at the gate. Frew asked me to take the people in, and said the relieving officer refused to give the lines, and I think the woman said the relieving officer was drunk. I replied that as the relieving officer declined to give the order, I was relieved, and the responsibility rested on him; and I told Mr. Frew to mind his own business. Nothing passed to the effect of his saying there might be evil consequences, and the children might die. That is a falsehood. It is untrue that I said, "Then let them die." I never made use of the words.

On my last return to the workhouse, about quarter-past eleven, I cross-questioned the woman again. Her husband was again at a considerable distance, and I had my suspicions that he wanted me to take his wife and children in, and get away himself. I called him over twice, and he, in a very slow manner, came over. The woman was very impertinent and abusive in her language, and I came to the conclusion she was a regular tramp, and not a fit person for the exercise of my provisional power, and so I went into the house.

To Dr. Brodie.] There was no order of the Board prohibiting me from exercising my provisional powers. I believe there is a resolution that all women, with one or more children, applying for relief, should be considered urgent cases, and should be admitted at once by the master. [See Board's Resolution, February 1878, in Appendix.] My explanation as regards leaving Mrs. M'Dwayne and her children out all night in face of that resolution is, that I did not think of it, nor should I now have remembered it but for Dr. Brodie's reading it.

I cannot say there was any resolution of the Board calculated to embarrass me in dealing with these cases.

I know nothing whatever of M'Dwayne's discharge from the workhouse on Monday, the 4th, except what I heard in the board-room.

To Mr. Stewart.] Q. Do you consider your responsibilities removed when the relieving officer refused a line?—A. I do to a great extent.

To Mr. Mortu.] The applications for admission from women and children have been very much more numerous, indeed, since the passing of the resolution of the guardians of 1877, as to their admission by the master on his own responsibility.

J. B. Whitla, Master.

Sworn before me at Belfast, this 22nd November 1880.

R. Bourke, L.C.I.

EXPLANATION laid before the Board of Guardians by Relieving Officer Hewitt.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Belfast, 11 October 1880.

In reply, by your resolution, to Mr. Frew's letter containing several charges against me, I have to state that the family named in his letter had been to my residence about 5.30 p.m., when they were informed that I was at Barrack-street Relief Office, and that they had time enough to be there before the closing hour. They did not go there, but waited about until I came into the street, where they met me, and I was asked by the woman McIlwayne for an order to the workhouse. I inquired where they lived. She said they had no address, which her husband said was not true, for they lived in Pipe-lane, and, believing that there was no urgency in their case, I told them to apply to the officer of the district. I gave them his address, and said that he would inquire into their case. About 8.45 p.m. Mr. Frew came to my house, in company with those named in his letter, and demanded me in the most imperative manner to give them lines of admission to the workhouse. I informed him of the previous visit of the McIlwayne family, whom I had directed to the officer of the district, who would have to inquire into their case. I have to state it is false that I did not take any of their names, as I had taken the girl Slavia's name that evening in the Relief Office, to appear at the weekly meeting of the board, which she did, and she refused to be admitted; therefore confirming my opinion as to the urgency of the case, and in Mr. Frew's presence I gave the man Smith an order, after making strict inquiries. And as to Mr. Frew's charge that I was under the influence of drink and quite incapable of inquiring into the several cases, I have to state that a more malicious falsehood could not be concocted, which I am in a position to prove, if necessary, and the only construction I can apply to this statement is, that I did not accede to his demand. But now, as the statements have been made publicly at the board, and in the presence of the representatives of the press, I am inclined to believe that they are entitled to as much confidence as is his statement that Samuel D. Frew lives at 31, Joy-street, Belfast, which he does not.

I am, &c.

A. Hewitt,

Relieving Officer, No. 3 District.

No. 2.

(No. 36,144/80—Belfast Union.)

REPORT of Mr. Bourke and Dr. Brodie.

Gentlemen,

Dublin, 11 December 1880.

We have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 19th October, to Mr. Bourke and Dr. MacCabe, transmitting copy of a communication addressed by you to the board of guardians of the Belfast Union in reference to certain statements regarding the workhouse, made on the 1st of September in the House of Commons, by the Member for Clonmel, and directing an inquiry to be held, and a report to be made to you on the following points:—

I. The general management of the Belfast Workhouse by the board of guardians, and its present condition, having regard especially to the discipline and classification of the inmates, and the alleged results of the want of due classification which it is stated has existed, to the state of health of, and rate of mortality among the children, and to the extent of the accommodation for the destitute poor, having regard to the recent Limitation Order issued by your Board.

II. The efficiency of the workhouse master, and his fitness for the responsible and important position which he holds.

We have further to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of Mr. Moore's speech of the 1st September, and his subsequent motion on the rate of infant mortality, together with the replies of the Chief Secretary on both occasions, and other papers returned herewith.

In pursuance of those instructions, Dr. Brodie (substituted for Dr. MacCabe) and I proceeded to Belfast on the 15th November, attended on the following day at the weekly meeting of the board to explain the course we meant to pursue, and

and employed that and the two next days in a joint inspection and scrutiny of the workhouse in every department. On subsequent occasions the house was unexpectedly visited by Dr. Brodie early in the morning, when the inmates were proceeding to breakfast, and late at night when locked into their dormitories.

The four following days, from the 19th to the 23rd, were occupied with evidence on oath, either tendered to us or given in obedience to our summons, in relation to the general subjects under reference, and to a specific charge against the master and one of the relieving officers brought by a person named Frew, which we had been directed to take the present opportunity of inquiring into.

On Wednesday, the 24th, we made a final inspection of certain departments of the workhouse, and having thus brought our inquiry to a close, beg to submit the conclusions we have arrived at upon the several subjects referred to us.

The General Management of the Workhouse by the Board of Guardians.

Upon this point we submit two returns. One showing the number of attendances given by each member of the board at the weekly meetings during the three years ending 29th September 1880, and the other showing the number of meetings of the visiting committee during the years 1878, 1879, and up to the 23rd July last, when the importance of more frequent meetings was pointed out in Dr. McCabe's half-yearly report. This return shows further the number of meetings since that date, and gives the names of the members attending.

Those documents appear to us to place beyond all doubt the interest taken by the board generally in the affairs of the union, and the readiness of many of the members to devote a large share of their time to the direction and control of those affairs.

The prompt acquiescence given by the guardians to the suggestions for a fuller degree of activity on part of the visiting committee seems to us to afford evidence of their desire to discharge effectually the important trust confided to them, and we have been unable to find a single instance in which they have resisted or unduly delayed the beneficial application of the law to the destitute poor of their union, or its effectual administration in the workhouse.

And here we may refer to the evidence of Mr. Robert L. Hamilton, voluntarily tendered to us, correcting the impression that his remarks from the bench of the police court, or his subsequent letters to the press, were intended to convey any censure on the board of guardians, or any charge of misadministration against them, and also to the evidence of Mr Taylor, chairman of the board, on this head (p. 4).

Present Condition of the Workhouse with Special Reference to the Discipline and Classification of the Inmates, and the alleged Results of Defects on these Points.

The classification of the inmates, as regards the separation of the sexes, we consider sufficiently perfect and complete; but the necessities that have, from time to time, arisen, for meeting the increase of inmates of various classes by structural alterations and additions, seem to us to have complicated the internal arrangements of the house, and impaired the simplicity and consequently the efficiency of the provisions for classification which were designed and carried out in the erection of the Irish workhouses.

There are, moreover, defects of detail in the internal administration of the house, which oppose special difficulties to the maintenance of strict separation so conducive to order and proper discipline. In illustration of this we would point to (a) the regulation for the issue of food from one single store, owing to which a large number of men and women pass backwards and forwards through the house from the different departments, three or four times daily; (b) the want of a responsible head over each department, including the kitchen and clothing store; and (c) the defective laundry and drying arrangements in some of the departments, entailing objectionable intercourse between them and the main laundry, and producing an undue strain on its resources.

These circumstances appear to us as increasing undesirably the opportunities for communication between individuals of different classes, and augmenting,

without necessity, the responsibility of officers whose vigilance must be in constant exercise to prevent abuses which better arrangements would render impossible.

But, notwithstanding all these difficulties, we have arrived at an assurance that classification has been substantially maintained in the workhouse, and that though the facilities for casual intercourse may serve to render the workhouse less unattractive to the inmates than all experience shows it should be made; they have not led to grave abuses, or offences against morality.

On that point we would refer to the statement of the chairman (p. 4). The Reverend R. Smith, Roman Catholic Chaplain, p. 8, and Mrs. Thompson, the Matron, p. 5. We may also mention that we were waited on by the Reverend Dr. Busby, and the Reverend Alexander Croie, Officiating Chaplains, in the workhouse, who offered similar testimony.

The strictest inquiry we could make, failed in tracing any of the cases alluded to in Mr. Moore's speech, of women having been confined of children, after an unbroken period of over nine months in the workhouse, and we are led to believe that the information upon which he spoke must have been inaccurate.

One case, however, referred to in the evidence of the Reverend R. Smith, Roman Catholic Chaplain of the workhouse, we feel bound to refer to, as the circumstances are peculiar and calculated, unless closely looked into, to create suspicion. It appears that Mr. Smith thought proper to solemnize a marriage one Sunday, in September 1879, after Mass, between two inmates of the workhouse, who "should" (as he says) "have been married." The woman was confined of a full-grown child, on the 22nd March last, in the workhouse. But on reference to the register, we find her to have been discharged on the 12th April 1879, and not re-admitted till the 19th July, and her husband to have been out of the workhouse from the 2nd April 1879 to 19th July of the same year. Some particulars of the case are given in the evidence of Mrs. Thompson, p. 5, and the facts do not in any way connect it with defective workhouse classification.

A further branch of the subject, however, appears to us deserving of notice. It is the want of separation in the nursery between the married and unmarried women having infant children. Those two classes occupy their apartments in common, and it is only when a woman comes in who has had several illegitimate children, that any distinction is observed. She is then placed in the separation ward with common prostitutes. These arrangements appear to require correction.

Extent of Accommodation having regard to the recent Limitation Order.

The recent Limitation Order fixed the total number of inmates to be accommodated at one time in the workhouse at 2,502. But, on the evening of the 22nd November, it contained 2,646 persons. The following table shows the distribution of those persons, and the excess of inmates in each department over the limit of the Sealed Order, and also over the accommodation as increased by certain apartments used as dormitories, but not included in the Order.

DEPARTMENT.	Limit of Accommodation as by Sealed Order.	Number of Inmates on 22nd November 1879.	Difference.		Increased Accommodation not in Sealed Order.	Actual excess of Numbers over Accommodation.
			Under.	Over.		
Wards for Healthy and Indefinite Inmates.	706	934	-	118	80	38
Nursery Buildings*	308	112	-	44	-	44
Infirmary and Lunatic Wards	622	719	-	97	42	15
Separation Wards	57	94	3	-	-	-
School Buildings	466	390	10	-	-	-
Children's Infirmary	42	88	-	46	32	8
Permanent Fever Ward	427	295	132	-	-	-
Total	2,624	2,646	155	289	154	148

* It is contended by the workhouse officers that this number shall be held to include accommodation for 74 infants, thus raising the number to 182. We have not, however, considered ourselves at liberty to travel out of the numbers returned in the Schedule to the Sealed Order of the 1st December 1879.

The apartments by which the accommodation has thus been increased are sheds in connection with the infirmary for adults and children, and a building in the men's yard, designed originally for stores.

The lunatic asylum now in course of erection by the guardians is advancing, and when ready for occupation, which may be in the course of two or three months, will relieve the two infirmaries, and afford ample space for the sick, both adult and children. And the guardians are, we believe, in treaty for the erection of permanent shed buildings, by which the other departments will be similarly freed from extra numbers.

In the meantime, the numbers will increase as the season advances, and provision must be made for the proper accommodation of the poor. No speedier or more effectual course suggests itself to us than the erection of the wooden sheds, described by Dr. MacCabe in his report of the 2nd July last.

The day-room accommodation for the healthy classes of both sexes appears to us inadequate, both as regards space and classification, and it would tend to the comfort of these people, and the general discipline of the house, if additional space were provided, and a separation effected between the aged and the young, who now use the same day-rooms, both on the male and on the female sides.

The probationary wards also require extension, the present sleeping accommodation being quite insufficient for the casual and other paupers frequenting them.

The State of Health of the Infant Children, and the Rate of Mortality among that Class.

The appearance of the infants presents no marked contrast to that of the same class in the workhouses of large towns generally. Urban populations, more especially in manufacturing towns such as Belfast, are known to contain a large proportion of delicate infants, whose health is more or less influenced by the circumstances which surround them, and the habits of the parents. But in this union infants born in the workhouse are often exposed to special dangers from a habit among the mothers (more prevalent here than anywhere else, as far as our observation extends) of taking the child out of the workhouse as soon as they, themselves, are able to move, keeping it outside for a certain time and then returning. These unsettled habits are carried so far by some of the mothers, that they have come to be distinguished under the name of "Runners." Such frequent changes appear certainly unfavourable to the infant, and render it exceedingly difficult to arrive at any just conclusion as to the effects of workhouse arrangements and conditions of life upon infant vitality. But we have had prepared a nominal return of every infant born in this union workhouse between the 29th September 1879 and the same date in the present year, with full particulars regarding each, and a return of a similar kind, affording the like information relative to all children under twelve months who were in the workhouse on the 29th of September, and of all infants who, though not in the house on that day, had come in subsequently, and died whilst under twelve months old.

The result of these returns may be thus stated:—

Infants born in the workhouse during the twelve months ending 29th September 1880	- - - - -	172
In the workhouse at the commencement of the same, but still under twelve months	- - - - -	53
Came in subsequently, and died when under twelve months	- - - - -	8
TOTAL	- - -	233
Deaths of infants (under twelve months) born subsequent to 29th September 1879	- - - - -	34
Deaths (under twelve months) of infants born in workhouse, and found there on 29th September 1879	- - - - -	23
Deaths (under twelve months) of infants born in workhouse, and admitted during year ended 29th September 1880	- - - - -	8
TOTAL Deaths	- - -	65

The death rate, resulting from these figures, which represent the question in a point of view most unfavourable to the workhouse, is 27.9 per cent., and considering that the normal rate of infant mortality throughout the kingdom, as given in Dr. Farr's tables, is 15 per cent., it does not appear to us that, under the highly unfavourable conditions above stated, the per-centage here brought out can be considered to represent an exceptionally high rate of mortality.

Efficiency of the Master, and his Fitness for his Position.

In approaching the question of the efficiency of the master we desire to place on record our complete satisfaction with the condition in which we found the workhouse in all particulars depending on the active and careful supervision of the officers. The inmates appeared to us well supplied with wholesome food, and sufficient clothing. The bedding in the dormitories was of good quality and condition, and every apartment seemed clean and well kept, except where, as in some of the day-rooms, the number of inmates was excessive. The hospital for infectious diseases and the schools are especially worthy of praise for their admirable arrangements and efficient condition. In the accounting departments we were satisfied with the system in use for regulating and checking the issues of provisions, necessaries, and clothing, and bringing them to charge, and we found the various books punctually kept up.

But in investigating the efficiency of the master and his fitness for the appointment he holds, matters came under our observation, and were brought before us in evidence, which appeared to outweigh the qualifications which the orderly and well-appointed state of the house showed him to possess.

His manner towards the inmates was shown to be rough and domineering, and in his dealings with the poor he appears wanting in sympathy and kindness. The case brought forward by Mr. Frew offered a striking example of this defect, as will be seen in the sequel of this Report, and the evidence brought forward in support of the charge. But there were not wanting other instances; and the resolution of the board of guardians of 13th November 1877 (p. 29), directing his special attention to the case of women with young children left at night outside the workhouse gate, showed that his disregard to the sufferings of the poor was habitual and characteristic.

It was not denied by the master that even now, after four years' experience in the workhouse, he is unable to make up the relief list, and the same may be said of other books kept in his office, and which he is unable to check.

There was evidence to show that his language was at times violent and profane, and his demeanour (at one period at least) offensive towards contractors.

A considerable amount of evidence was tendered to us, and will be found in the Appendix, charging him with appearing at times as if under the influence of drink, exhibiting indifference to the express directions of the guardians in certain matters and failing in the exact and satisfactory performance of his duties as master in various smaller details. Moreover, the chairman of the board felt constrained to say, whilst under examination, that since his appointment the complaints against him had been numerous, and that as long as matters remained as at present there was little expectation of peace in the workhouse (p. 16). Upon the whole, therefore, though recognising in Captain Whittle many qualifications for duly discharging the duties of his important situation, we feel bound to add that he fails in many essential requisites; in sympathy towards the poor, in a thorough knowledge of all the duties of his office, and in general language and demeanour towards those with whom he is brought into official relation, as well as in exact performance of the orders of the board, whose servant he is.

Complaint of Mr. S. D. Frew against Master and Relieving Officer.

We now proceed to report upon the complaint brought against the master and one of the relieving officers, charging them with inhumanity and drunkenness, which we were directed to investigate by your letter of the 2nd November. The evidence will be found in the Appendix hereto.

It

It appears that on the night of the 1st of October, after nine o'clock, Mr. S. D. Frew, residing in Joy-street, was passing the workhouse and observed some persons outside the gate, among whom was a woman with two young children, and a girl of about 17. On making inquiries it was ascertained that they were all seeking admission to the workhouse, but were denied it by the master without a relieving officer's ticket. Mr Frew's statement is confirmed by the Reverend Mr. White, who was present on the occasion, and addressed the master, as he was passing into the house from an adjoining residence occupied by his family, and asked for the people's admission, but was refused on the ground already mentioned. Thereupon Mr. White suggested Mr. Frew's taking the people to the relieving officer. He accordingly went with a woman named M'llwayne and one child, the second remaining with the father at the workhouse gate; the girl Sarah Slevin and a man named Johnson or Smith. Arrived in the street where relieving officer Hewitt resides, Mr. Frew made application for tickets, but, as he swears, was roughly refused and threatened with the police. The old man, Smith, however, was given a ticket. Mr. Frew alleges that on this occasion the relieving officer was tipsy. Returning to the workhouse gate, which he reached about a quarter to eleven, he again encountered the master and appealed to him to admit the woman and children. The master, he states, refused, and when pressed on the ground that the children might die, replied, "Let them die there." Mr. Frew also swears that the master was under the influence of drink. In his statements he is corroborated by the man M'llwayne and the girl Slevin. The woman M'llwayne had left the country before our inquiry, and was not examined.

The people, in point of fact, did pass the night on the damp cold ground outside the workhouse gate.

The explanation of the master is that he did not consider the cases were of sudden and urgent necessity, and he produced some evidence to refute the charge of drunkenness (Donne, p. 20, Gilmore, p. 21).

The relieving officer justifies his refusal on the ground (as regards the M'llwaynes) that he had been applied to by them at six o'clock the same evening, when he referred them to the other relieving officer to whose district they belonged (Hewitt, p. 18). Finding they had not acted on his directions, he seems to have considered the responsibility transferred from himself to them. He adduced evidence leading to the conclusion that he could not have been drunk on the occasion. (Mills and Caplin, pp. 19 and 20.)

Upon the facts of this case we have only to observe that, in arriving at our conclusions respecting the master's efficiency, we have given weight to the unfortunate proceedings of the night of the 1st October, now under review, and that it seems unnecessary to give judgment on the charge of intoxication, about which the evidence is contradictory.

As regards the conduct of relieving officer Hewitt, we feel bound to express our dissatisfaction at the course he pursued; but we think the difficulties which surround the path of a relieving officer, in reference to the duty of affording provisional relief, may be taken into account in pronouncing on the case; and after the evidence adduced by him, we are not disposed to attach any weight to the conclusions arrived at on the question of intoxication by the witnesses in support of the charge.

We have, &c.

Richard Bourke,

T. Brodie, M.D., &c.,

Local Government Inspectors.

The Local Government Board.

RETURN showing ATTENDANCE of the POOR LAW GUARDIANS of the BELFAST UNION, during the Years ended on 29th September 1878, 1879, and 1880, at Board Meetings.

EX-OFFICIO GUARDIANS—22.

	1877-8.	1878-9.	1879-80.
William Valentine - - - - -	—	—	—
William Costes (died 29th March 1878) - - -	6	—	—
Sir Charles Lanyon - - - - -	1	1	3
Robert J. Tennent - - - - -	—	—	—
Charles Duffin - - - - -	3	10	19
George Murney - - - - -	4	5	10
James Thompson - - - - -	46	48	42
David Taylor - - - - -	43	45	48
Sir Edward Coey - - - - -	1	—	—
Sir Thomas M'Clare - - - - -	13	3	10
George Gray - - - - -	—	—	—
David M'Connell - - - - -	20	12	9
Thomas Valentine - - - - -	4	4	2
Thomas M'Donnell (died 25th September 1878) -	—	—	—
H. H. McNeill - - - - -	1	—	—
John B. Houston - - - - -	16	10	16
James Alexander - - - - -	31	22	19
Henry Murney - - - - -	2	—	4
John F. Ferguson - - - - -	—	—	—
Robert C. Thomson - - - - -	1	—	2
John Cleland - - - - -	—	—	—
John Harrison - - - - -	12	8	18
Robert G. Donville - - - - -	2	5	6
John Anderson (appointed in September 1878) -	—	29	27
James Craig - - - - -	—	—	—
James P. Corry - - - - -	—	—	2
James A. Henderson - - - - -	—	—	1

ELECTED GUARDIANS—22.

	1877-8.	1878-9.	1879-80.
James Adams (S.) - - - - -	42	47	42
William Clegg - - - - -	37	30	33
James R. Christian - - - - -	29	25	24
Thomas Gaffikin - - - - -	47	46	44
William Harper (ceased from 25th March 1879) -	19	6	—
James Magee - - - - -	42	47	44
Thomas C. S. Corry - - - - -	46	49	43
James Jenkins (ceased from 25th March 1879) -	44	25	—
David Fulton (ceased from 25th March 1879) -	38	18	—
James Adams (D.) - - - - -	33	26	39
James Entwistle (ill health) - - - - -	—	—	—
James M'Callough - - - - -	41	27	21
Robert Walker - - - - -	20	— dead.	—
Thomas Biggar - - - - -	28	35	39

ELECTED GUARDIANS—22—continued.

	1877-8.	1878-9.	1879-80.
John Ireland (ceased from 25th March 1880) -	28	28	11
William B. Fitzsimons (dead) - - - -	18	9	—
William Rodgers (ceased from March 1878) - -	20	—	—
James Montgomery (dead) - - - - -	2	—	—
John Saffern - - - - -	37	42	34
Hugh McClements - - - - -	25	24	25
William Carlile (ceased from 25th March 1880) -	25	28	8
James McMeekin - - - - -	46	40	37
John Magee (elected 25th March 1878), ceased 1879	17	38	21
Samuel Darling (elected 25th March 1878) - -	25	51	51
James Moreland (elected 25th March 1878) - -	16	25	29
John Johnston (elected 25th March 1878) - -	18	30	29
William Ireland (elected 25th May 1879) - - -	-	17	44
John Morton (elected 25th March 1879) - - -	-	25	48
John Rea (elected 25th March 1879) - - -	-	4	21
T. A. Archbold (elected 25th June 1880) - - -	-	-	15
Samuel Kentley (elected 25th March 1880) - -	-	-	18
Robert Stewart (elected 25th March 1880) - -	-	-	25
Robert H. Ireland (elected 25th March 1880) -	-	-	13

MEETINGS of the VISITING COMMITTEE of the BOARD of GUARDIANS of the BELFAST UNION.

During the years ended on 28th September 1878, and on 29th September 1879, there were 13 and 11 meetings respectively of the Visiting Committee.

This committee, which only visited the house on board days, was composed of guardians who were in attendance at the board meetings.

Four meetings, similar to the above mentioned, were held during the next year up till the 23rd July, since which date 10 meetings have been held on days other than those on which the board met, and at which the attendance was as follows:—

David Taylor, ex-officio guardian	-	-	-	-	-	8
John Anderson "	-	-	-	-	-	8
James Thompson "	-	-	-	-	-	10
T. C. S. Corry, elected "	-	-	-	-	-	3
T. A. Archbold "	-	-	-	-	-	3
Thomas Gaffikin "	-	-	-	-	-	5
James Adams (S.) "	-	-	-	-	-	4
Thomas Biggar "	-	-	-	-	-	1
Robert Stewart "	-	-	-	-	-	3
John Murton "	-	-	-	-	-	1
James R. Christian "	-	-	-	-	-	2
Samuel Kentley "	-	-	-	-	-	1

EXTRACT from Minutes of Proceedings of the Board of Guardians of this Union, on the 12th day of November 1877.

A discussion took place with regard to persons lying outside the workhouse gate at night,—

"*Resolved*,—That this board is of opinion that all applications for admission into the workhouse by women with one or more children are urgent cases, and should be admitted by the master at once." (Unanimous.)

—No. 3.—

(No. 36,144/1880—Belfast Union.)

LETTER from the Local Government Board to the Board of Guardians.

Local Government Board, Dublin,
20 December 1880.

Sir,

THE Local Government Board for Ireland transmit to you, for the information of the board of guardians of Belfast Union, a copy of the Report of their Inspectors, Mr. Bourke and Dr. Brodie, on the inquiry recently held into the condition and management of the Belfast Workhouse, together with the evidence taken by them on the subject.

The Board learn with much satisfaction that the most important charges which have been made regarding the state of the workhouse have not been sustained, and that Mr. Hamilton, on whose letter so much stress has been laid, came forward voluntarily at the inquiry and tendered his evidence, in which he stated that, in alluding to illegitimacy in the workhouse, he did not mean to convey that the condition of pregnancy of the women referred to arose in the workhouse, or that the evil complained of was due to mal-administration on the part of the board of guardians.

The Board are also glad to observe from the Report of their Inspectors that they found the workhouse in a satisfactory condition in so many respects, but the Board must request the careful and immediate attention of the guardians to some defects in the internal arrangements and administration of the establishment, which have been described in the Report.

The overcrowding is, especially, a matter which requires prompt action on the part of the guardians, and the Board will address them again on the subject of the misunderstanding which appears to have arisen as to the accommodation in the nursery buildings.

The Board have given the observations of their Inspectors on the question of the efficiency of the workhouse master due consideration, and, having regard to the facts elicited at the inquiry, and to the views expressed by their Inspectors as to the manner in which Captain Whitla has acted while holding the office, the Board are not prepared to permit him to retain any longer such an important and responsible post, and they must therefore request that the board of guardians will be so good as to call upon him at once to tender his resignation.

By Order of the Board,

The Clerk, Belfast Union.

B. Banks, Secretary.

— II. —

BELFAST WORKHOUSE (INQUIRY).

COPY of CORRESPONDENCE on the Subject between the Chief Secretary for
Ireland and the Member for *Clonmel*.

Dublin Castle, }
4 February 1881. }

T. H. BURKE.

(No. 28,740.)

Mr. Arthur Moore, M.P., to the Chief Secretary for *Ireland*.

19, Grafton-street, Bond-street, London, W.,
8 November 1880.

Sir,

On a recent occasion I felt it my duty to draw attention to certain abuses prevailing in Belfast Workhouse. I did so in my place in the House of Commons, and was gratified to receive ample assurances from you that a full and searching inquiry would be held into all these matters. But while drawing attention to what I believed to be the mismanagement of the house, for which the officials and guardians were responsible, I further pointed out that it was the Local Government Board which was primarily and principally responsible for these continued disorders, by reason of the vacillating and half-hearted course it adopted in dealing with each abuse as it arose. Since then I have learnt with deep regret that at the approaching inquiry, which is about to be held in pursuance of the understanding arrived at in the House of Commons, two Local Government Board Inspectors are about to preside. I venture to think these gentlemen are hereby placed in a false position; that they cannot be expected to be altogether unbiassed in their decision. Both these gentlemen I believe had recently held inquiries upon matters intimately connected with the subject of the proposed investigation and Dr. McCabe's last report was so recent that at the time I made my statement it had barely had time to be laid on the Table of the House. That report was of a reassuring character, and tended to allay all apprehension as to the state of the workhouse.

Is it to be expected that this gentleman could enter upon the present inquiry with unprejudiced mind; or would easily he be led to stultify his previous report?

I now beg to ask you, Sir, whether it is by your order, or with your sanction and approval, that this course has been adopted, only venturing to remark that it seems somewhat anomalous that in an inquiry where the Local Government Board is itself arraigned, two of its paid Inspectors should sit in judgment.

Begging the favour of your immediate attention to this matter,

I am, &c.

(signed) Arthur Moore.

The Right Hon. W. E. Forster, M.P.,
Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to Mr. Arthur Moore, M.P.

Sir,

Irish Office, 18 November 1880.

IN reply to your letter of the 8th instant on the subject of the inquiry to be held into certain alleged abuses in the management of the Belfast Workhouse, I must in the first place state that I am not prepared to admit that the action of the Local Government Board in connexion with the administration of the poor law in the Belfast Union is a subject to be investigated at the coming inquiry.

I gave no undertaking to this effect, and if you will refer to my observations in the House of Commons on the 1st of September, you will see that I said, in alluding to the alleged abuses, that the blame mainly, rested, first with the Belfast board of guardians, and, secondly, with the Belfast ratepayers who elected those guardians; and I also pointed out that although the Local Government Board had to inquire into such charges, and to find out whether they were true or not, and then, as far as they could, to put things right, they had not the absolute power to put things right unless they resorted to the very strong act of dissolving the board of guardians and appointing vice-guardians in their places.

I now send you a copy of the letter addressed by the Local Government Board to the board of guardians on the 19th ultimo, which was written with my approval, and which defines the scope of the inquiry; and it does not appear to me that there is any cause to depart from the ordinary course of procedure in cases where the management of a poor law union and the conduct of its officers are called in question, and to employ persons outside the department to conduct the investigation.

With reference to your remarks about the two Inspectors who had been selected for the duty, I think it right to say that they are gentlemen in whose ability and impartiality implicit confidence might be placed. Mr. Bourke has never held an inquiry in the Belfast Union upon matters connected with the general management of the workhouse; he conducted one inquiry in the union, but it had reference to a specific charge preferred against the matron, which was disposed of at the time, and this case, as you will observe by the letter to the guardians, will not be re-opened.

With respect to Dr. McCabe, who made an ordinary report on the Belfast Workhouse in July last, I do not believe that any opinion which he formed at that time on the facts then before him would prevent his making an unbiassed and conscientious report on the facts which may be elicited at the inquiry now to be held, but to remove any objection which would be entertained by others to his undertaking the investigation now ordered, because he has on a former occasion reported on the management of the workhouse, the Local Government Board have determined to relieve him from this duty, and they have instructed another Inspector to take his place.

To Arthur, Moore, Esq., M.P.

&c. &c.

19, Grafton-street, Bond-street, W.

I am, &c.

(signed) W. E. Forster.

(No. 542 M. 1880—Belfast Union.)

The Secretary to the Local Government Board to the Clerk of the Belfast Union.

Local Government Board, Dublin,

19 October 1880.

Sir,

THE Local Government Board for Ireland have had under consideration the observations made in the House of Commons by Mr. Moore, Member of Parliament for Clonmel, on the 1st ultimo, when he drew attention to certain alleged abuses and irregularities in the Belfast Workhouse, and moved that in the opinion of the House prompt measures were necessary to restore public confidence in that institution. The Chief Secretary for Ireland undertook that the charges made by Mr. Moore should be thoroughly sifted, and the Board observe also that the board

board of guardians look forward to an official inquiry into the allegations referred to, as they resolved, on the 14th ultimo, to postpone the consideration of the question of the retention or removal of the workhouse master until the result of such investigation shall be made known. The Board notice that some of the matters alluded to by Mr. Moore have already been made the subject of inquiry, and they do not deem it necessary, or fair to the persons concerned, that specific charges against officers which have been disposed of, after the reception of sworn evidence thereon, should be re-opened, and these officers placed a second time upon their defence in respect of the same alleged offences, but the Board are prepared to institute a searching inquiry on the following points:—

I. The general management of the workhouse by the board of guardians, and its present condition, having regard specially to the discipline and classification of the inmates and the alleged results of the want of due classification which it is stated has existed, to the state of health of, and rate of mortality among, the children, and to the extent of the accommodation for the destitute poor, having regard to the recent Limitation Order issued by the Board.

II. The efficiency of the workhouse master and his fitness for the responsible and important position which he holds. The Local Government Board consider it advisable that this inquiry should be conducted by two Inspectors, one being a Medical Inspector, and they have transmitted the necessary instructions accordingly to Mr. Richard Bourke and Dr. McCabe, who will give the guardians due notice of the time they may fix for the purpose.

The Clerk, Belfast Union.

By Order of the Board,
B. Banks, Secretary.

BELFAST WORKHOUSE.

COPIES of Minutes of Executive Adm. at the recent Inquiry held at the BELFAST WORKHOUSE by Inspectors Smith and Smith, together with their Report thereon, and Final Decisions of the Local Government Board, and, of any Correspondence on this Subject between the Chief Secretary for Ireland and the Minister for Education.

(Mr. Moore.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
in Black Ink.
